THE CALL OF THE WAR

Recruiting Sermon

PREACHED IN ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, OTTAWA.

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BY

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A Sermon

by

HON'Y. LIEUT.-COLONEL REV. DR. W. T. HERRIDGE

"He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one."—LUKE XXII: 36.

INTRODUCTION

These words sound strange from the lips of Jesus Christ, and we must be careful not to misunderstand them. Throughout His whole career on earth He had taught his disciples that their triumph was not to be won by violence, but by character. Cruel war is incompatible with the

Ideals of the Prince of Peace;

and when His ideals are accepted, and put into practice, nations will learn war no more.

At the same time, even Christ shows the fighting spirit sometimes, and will not accept peace at any price. While He refuses to embark on mere selfish quarrels, and visits with care the humblest and most needy souls, His indignation blazes forth against greed and hypocrisy, and making a lash for the backs of the desecrators of His Temple, He drives them out. He is angry at the proper time because He is merciful; because His supreme passion, at whatever cost, is TO SWEEP EARTH CLEAN OF THE EVILS WHICH DEFILE IT.

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The Christian religion is not an emasculate, sentimental thing which has lost the capacity for virile displeasure. Though it destroys mean and petty hatreds, it creates nobler ones. It does not stab in the dark, nor MURDER THE INNOCENT; but crooked, devilish ways it will resist even unto death. A false intolerance is exchanged for a true intolerance: an irreconcilable hostility to every form of imposture, a vindictive rage against tyrants and oppressors, a stern resolve that, by the help of God, all that is vile shall be utterly overthrown.

And, therefore, while no true disciple of Jesus Christ will rush into war, he may have war thrust upon him against his will unless he is prepared to plead for the withdrawal of Christian forces from the making of human history.

We have many faults to confess before God. But THE CRIME OF BLOOD GUILTINESS DOES NOT LIE AT OUR DOOR. Britain sought by every possible means to prevent strife, and only drew the sword when she could not do otherwise. We have not been trained to accept

Brutal Outrage and Unprovoked Terrorism

with calm indifference. Some of the seeming successes of this war have been really failures that will ensure an immortality of shame. Some of the methods it has sanctioned would be repudiated by the best thought of paganism as too fiendish for human beings. The spirit in which our foes have precipitated it, because they believed the time was ripe, is a spirit which, wherever it had its way, would dethrone the Kingdom of God among men, and set up in its place the usurpation of foul iniquity.

It will be our own fault, then, if we do not

Make this a Holy War

that fires us with moral enthusiasm as well as undaunted courage; a war in which we can humbly, but sincerely, invoke the help of God; a war in defence of justice and freedom; a war which has no meaner purpose than the establishment of Christian principles among the nations of the world.

If this gigantic struggle is thus viewed in its true light, the pulpit need not apologize for making some effort to stir up a

Deeper Sense of National Duty

with regard to it. For in spite of the sorrow that has visited some homes amongst us, I am not sure that the people of Canada, as a whole, are yet awake to the full significance of the situation; and too little has been done to bring it before them in a clear and comprehensive way. Happily we have been free from the rude alarms which England has experienced. They have created no panic there. But it would, at least, disturb our equanimity to have

Zeppelins dropping Bombs over Parliament Hill.

The critics of the British Navy should be reminded of the fact that, but for its existence, our home waters long ago, would have been menaced by hostile battleships, and our seaports subjected to fierce bombardment. When we think of the suffering of BRAVE LITTLE BELGIUM, and read the gruesome tales of pillage and rapine, we have reason to thank God that the worst HORRORS OF WAR HAVE NOT VISITED US AT ALL.

Yet this fortunate escape may, perhaps, make us more slow to

Recognize that this is Our War;

and even though we do not hear the actual clash of arms, the issue of it must needs be of far reaching consequence to every one of us. We have given some proof of the belief that our privileges as British subjects cannot be separated from grave responsibilities, and thousands of Canadians are now across the sea, or making ready to go. But I fear that many of our youth have not yet seriously considered the question whether they cannot do something, directly or indirectly, to strengthen our national resources in this epoch-making hour. Why should we not have at least

A Quarter of a Million Men

in training for such emergencies as the future may unfold, not all of them necessarily in the firing line, but fitted to serve in some useful way wherever duty calls them? We should then have barely done, in proportion, what the Motherland has done already. And in view of the splendid valour which will make YPRES, ST. JULIEN AND LANGEMARCK immortal names in our history, I am persuaded that, apart from the martial re-enforcement which would thus be brought to our cause, such an awakening of Canadian manhood, such an impressive object-lesson in the unity of the British Empire would be bound to have its effect in

Shortening the Duration of the War.

If we hope for a peace that shall endure, and that shall usher in the dawn of a new and brighter day, we must not

shrink from the sacrifice which the stern needs of the time demand from us. No life, surely, can be just the same during this war as it was before it. We are forced to postpone mere personal concerns in the face of public duty, and to lift our eyes to the wider horizons which now, thunder-riven, are presented to our view. It is sad, no doubt, to see our sons going across the sea, and to know that, in all likelihood, some will not return. But it would be far sadder to risk the loss, or even the transient interruption of the blessings which we have come to regard as our inalienable birthright; IT WOULD BE FAR SADDER IF, ONE BY ONE, THE LIGHTS OF LIBERTY WENT OUT AROUND THE WORLD.

No good purpose can be served by depreciating our enemies. I daresay that many Germans, at heart, oppose the mailed arrogance which caused this strife, and sigh for the old days when "Kultur" was culture, and not its monstrous travesty. But while we have something better to do than indulge in wholesale abuse, or gratuitous suspicions, the fact remains that, as far as we are aware,

The German Nation is practically a Unit

in striking the present blow. It has been long meditated, and for years the most systematic and skilful preparations have been made for it. We may not be in a mood just now to take lessons from Germany, but the madness of her colossal egotism and false ambition has, at least, called forth her utmost energies, has stirred her citizens, both men and women, to contribute something to the common task, and has inspired a reckless disregard of sacrifice. Surely if what we believe is a bad cause thus commands the zeal of a whole people, shall we, who believe

that our cause is a just one, be behind them in strenuous effort to make the

Full Force of the British Empire felt

in such stern rebuke of Kaiserism that its abhorrent countenance shall affright the earth no more?

Obviously, of course, we cannot all go to the war. Some of us are too old for active service. Some are physically disqualified. Some, in the long run, will be able to do as much for their country by the faithful discharge of duties at home.

The Eagerness of many of Our Youth to take Part in this Struggle is a Credit to Canada.

I sympathize with those who, while burning to join their comrades, have not been deemed fit for the strain, and with those of like mind who, for various good reasons, must stay where they are. Yet there are others throughout this big land by whom, whether through dullness or indifference, the call of patriotism has been so far disregarded, and private interest held of greater moment than the public weal.

Now the sooner this easy-going selfish spirit is driven out, the better for us all. Whether we buy a sword or not by selling our garment, it will be a poor boast that we have kept our garment, even if we are able to keep it, when it becomes the badge of degradation. By all means let our young lads PLAY THEIR GAMES AND MAKE THEIR BODIES STRONG AND CLEAN. But the professional sports, where a few are paid to take exercise, while the rest look on: the race-track courses, the moving picture shows and such like things attract too many of our

full-grown men who might well ask themselves just now whether their time could not be spent in a more useful way. Perhaps we might even dispense for a while the elaborate sporting columns in our newspapers. They do not fit in very well with the

Cablegrams from across the Sea.

We have serious tasks confronting us as a people; and if we fail to discern their importance, and to try, as best we can, to discharge them, any attempt at lighter fun is nothing but a hideous and disgraceful mockery.

Under certain circumstances, "safety first" is an excellent motto. It is pure foolishness for any one to run risks which can be of no benefit either to himself or others; and every corporation which looks for public patronage is bound to show proper regard for the welfare of all those who have any dealings with it. But, in great crises "safety first" would be

The Watchword of a Coward.

The quality of life on this earth ought to mean more than the mere length of it.

Many things come before personal safety;
Honour comes before it;
Freedom comes before it;
Righteousness comes before it.

Safety is the last consideration when the dearest treasures of the soul are placed in peril; and, however fierce the attack upon them, no one worthy to be called a man would refuse to guard such an inheritance even unto death.

I HAVE NO DOUBT AS TO THE FINAL ISSUE OF THIS STRIFE.

It cannot be that military despotism shall yet prove victorious, and an outrage be fastened upon the conscience of the world. Fervent supplication will rise to God that such a calamity may never be, and hope, the last gift that remains to mortals when others have flown away, will turn from an outlook so gloomy and forlorn. But it will not be enough simply to wish for triumph, or to pray for triumph, we must also work for it. We must refuse the blandishments of ease and sloth, and accept the opportunity for heroic self-sacrifice.

We must silence all Minor Discords amongst us

in one united chorus whose inspiring refrain shall ring from shore to shore. We must concentrate our best thought and our noblest effort upon the herculean labour which it is our privilege to share, and must not falter TILL WE HAVE FOUGHT OUT AND WON THE BATTLE FOR LIBERTY, NOT OUR LIBERTY ALONE, BUT THE LIBERTY OF ALL MANKIND.

God bless our boys who have gone or who may yet go across the sea. We mourn for those who have fallen, and pray that a Divine comfort may rest upon the homes which they shall see no more. Yet we cannot feel that they have given their lives in vain. Their dauntless courage will never be forgotten, nor their splendid obedience as soldiers of the King. The voice of their blood cries from the ground in piercing tones; and it would be strange indeed if even the most careless and self-centred youth amongst us did not feel in his breast

The Thrill of a new Patriotism,

and the irresistible pressure of a new sense of duty waking the

manhood in him to serve, to suffer, aye, even to die for God and his native land.

For we need more men in training to take some part in this great war; and if they offer themselves, we must see that no removable hindrances bar the way. We need men who discern the signs of the times, and who will prove all the more efficient, whether in counsel or in fight, because they are men of clean hands and pure hearts. This war is no mere vulgar brawl to be settled in a day. It is a

Struggle between Opposing Ideals of Life,

and a long hard road may yet have to be travelled before the happy end is gained. We are fighting for the rights of others, not less than for our own. We are fighting for those intangible possessions which are the crowning glory of mankind, and the loss of which would cover earth as with a funeral pall, and wrap it in eternal gloom. We are fighting for the overthrow of impious pride and cruel oppression, and for

The final Triumph of Truth and Righteousness.

I SEE IN IMAGINATION A STALWART HOST OF YOUNG CANADIANS MARCHING AS TO WAR. The cause they espouse should nerve their arm and ennoble their character. They will be "compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses" who watch their valorous deeds and anticipate their final victory. THE HEROES OF PAST DAYS will seem to share their high endeavour, and from myriads on earth the voice of suppliant prayer will mingle in its ascent to God with the shouts of conflict and the shock of arms. If, when peace has come again, they return to the land they have left behind, they will be greeted with the welcome which befits those who have done their duty; and

IF THEY ARE CALLED UPON TO LAY THE SACRIFICE OF THEIR LIVES ON THE ALTAR OF FREEDOM, THEIR NAMES WILL BE ENROLLED IN THE RANKS OF THE IMMORTALS, AND THEIR MEMORY CHERISHED BY GENERATIONS YET UNBORN.